

Annual Report for 2002-2003

By Peter Stanford Director of the Trust

As Frank Longford gazed out on the 700 people gathered at Church House, Westminster, on July 10, 2002, to hear Cherie Booth QC deliver the first Longford Lecture, I was sure I detected a slight smile crossing his lips. He loved a party. He wasn't there in person, of course, though his widow Elizabeth came to greet the speaker beforehand. However, a large photograph of Frank was projected up behind the stage in the circular Assembly Hall where the lecture took place, facing out onto an audience made up of life-long friends, MPs, peers, judges, his family and the very many from among the public who had admired his outspoken and often controversial commitment during his lifetime to social and prison reform. 'It is great,' Cherie Booth began by remarking, 'to see that Lord Longford is still bringing together such an exciting mix of people'.

The Frank Longford Charitable Trust has been established to ensure that there will be a date each year on the calendar when that 'exciting mix of people' will be able to hear and debate a lecture that will be addressed in equal measure to policymakers and public opinion. Frank loved to challenge even the most basic assumptions and the lecture will be, the trustees are determined, an opportunity for fresh and sometimes uncomfortable thinking to be given an airing. Thanks to our generous sponsors, Independent Newspapers, the hard work of our partners in organising the lecture, the Prison Reform Trust, and, in large measure, to the continuing resonance of the Longford name, the Longford Lecture will, it is planned, be a high profile event each year.

That was certainly the case in 2002 when television crews and reporters were tripping over themselves for seats in the gallery. Cherie Booth's address on *The Law, The Victims and The Vulnerable* was a triumph and received wide coverage in the national press the next morning. The concerns she articulated in the lecture about the high number of women prisoners were even quoted a few weeks later by a High Court judge as he passed sentence on a female defendant.

An integral part of the Trust's work, and of our annual event, is the Longford Prize, awarded to an individual or organization who or which reflects the courage and humanity of Frank Longford in his long and often lonely crusade for social and penal reform. Frank's daughters,

Rachel Billington and Judith Kazantzis, were on stage with Cherie Booth and chair, Jon Snow, to present the first Longford Prize to Audrey Edwards, who has worked ceaselessly and selflessly since the murder of her son while in prison custody to improve the treatment and understanding of mentally-ill offenders.

A good start has been made this year in placing the lecture and the prize on a sound financial footing. We continue to work to build a base which will ensure that the trust's work will be funded in perpetuity. Several trusts and many individuals agreed with great generosity to become founding donors. On behalf of the trustees and the Longford family, I would like to express our profound gratitude in this regard to The Avenue Trust, Diana and Nicholas Baring, Lord Black of Crossharbour, Shirley Conran, the Earl of Dartmouth, Guy and Ruth East, The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, The Forte Charitable Trust, Lady Antonia Fraser, Benjie Fraser, Damian Fraser, The Robert Gavron Charitable Trust, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Lord Haskins, Nigel McNair Scott, Richard I Morris Jr, Northern Rock Foundation, Thomas Pakenham, Peter Soros, Sir James Spooner, Lady Juliet Townsend and Lord Weidenfeld. The support of Independent Newspapers and in particular of its proprietor, Sir Anthony O'Reilly, is much valued.

Fund-raising efforts continue apace as we enter our second year. The trustees are keen to develop as part of the trust's work a scheme - the Longford Scholarships - to offer financial support to young ex-prisoners who wish to study at vocational, further and higher education levels. Many individuals have given generously of their time and enthusiasm to ensure the success of the Frank Longford Charitable Trust, but I would like to highlight in particular the work of his son, Kevin Pakenham, whose inspired idea the trust was, his daughter Rachel Billington who has spearheaded the fund-raising campaign, and his granddaughter, Miranda Kazantzis, whose contribution as honorary treasurer has spread far beyond preparing the accounts. We all look forward to seeing Frank smile again at the second Longford Lecture in June, 2003.